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ABSTRACT

The impact of inclusion of literacy and numeracy into Australia's Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training was examined in a case study in New South Wales (NSW). Data were collected through the following activities: interviews with key informants from urban and regional NSW; observations of the delivery of units of competency from the certificate by an urban registered training provider at two 3-day workshops and informal interviews with workshop participants; and a phone survey of a small number of registered training organizations in NSW. A major skills gap was perceived between trainers and assessors with the previous qualifications and what is required for the new qualification, especially in the area of awareness of literacy and numeracy. Trainers and assessors requested more support materials but appeared unaware of resources currently available through the Australian National Training Authority or National Assessors and Workplace Trainers Body (NAWTB) Web site. (The bibliography lists 35 references. The following items are appended: the language, literacy, and numeracy skills

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required of trainers/assessors as specified in the training package's evidence guide; list of organizations represented by key informants; text of the interview with the presenter of "Workplace Assessment"; and list of 24 resources on the NAWTB Web site.) (MN)

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Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium

ALNARC

Literacy & numeracy in the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training

Jenny McGuirk

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Literacy & Numeracy in Certificate IV
Assessment & Workplace Training

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It should also be acknowledged that a number of people are grappling with the implementation stage of training packages, particularly assessors and trainers, and adult literacy and numeracy teachers. Their efforts to implement such significant change is to be applauded.

Acronyms

ACAL	Australian Council of Adult Literacy
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
ACE	Adult and Community Education
ALNARC	Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium
AMES	Adult Migrant English Service
BACE	Board of Adult and Community Education
CBT	Competency Based Training
DET	Department of Education and Training
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
ECCA	Evening and Community Colleges Association
ESD	Educational Services Division
FtF	Framing the Future
ITAB	Industry Training Advisory Board
NAWTB	National Assessors and Workplace Trainers Body
NRS	National Reporting System
NTF	National Training Framework
NTRA	National Training Reform Agenda
OTEN	Open Training and Education Network
RCC	Recognition of Current Competence
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETAB	Vocational Education and Training Advisory Board
WELL	Workplace English Language and Literacy

Note to the reader

Understandings of literacy and numeracy

In terms of what is meant by literacy and numeracy, the National Assessors and Workplace Trainers Body (NAWTB) uses the following definition in its Facilitator's Pack:

> *Literacy is the ability to read and use written information. It means being able to recognise, read and interpret workplace documents and signs and write what is required in order to do your job accurately and efficiently.*
>
> *Numeracy involves being able to carry out mathematical operations that may be part of one's job. It includes knowing when to use maths, what maths to use and how to do it.*
>
> (Facilitator's Pack 1999 p. 44)

Such a definition locates literacy and numeracy within a workplace context and as an important aspect of workplace communication.

In other publications such as *Built in - not bolted on* (Wignall 1998) and *A new assessment tool* (Goulborn & Alexander 1998) aspects of communication as identified in the National Reporting System (NRS) have been developed to identify the purpose of communication within a workplace.

Maintaining anonymity of informants and participants

All care has been taken throughout the report to ensure that informants and participants remain anonymous. To this end, individual informants have been referred to by a number (coded by the researcher but not appearing anywhere in the report). Particular providers, be they Adult and Community Education (ACE) colleges, TAFE colleges, universities or private colleges, have been referred to as either regional or metropolitan RTOs (Registered Training Organisations).

Executive Summary

In the last half of 1999, NSW ALNARC investigated the Training Package *Assessment and Workplace Training*, in particular the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, and the impact of the inclusion of literacy and numeracy into the standards.

This particular training package was chosen because of its impact on all industries. It was hypothesised that the new Certificate IV with its inclusion of literacy and numeracy into the standards might result in literacy and numeracy being addressed explicitly in the delivery of the Certificate. It could be argued that if assessors and trainers are required to take account of literacy and numeracy in their assessments and training, then they need to be made aware of such issues and given strategies and tools for dealing with them in their training. This additional requirement on assessors and trainers can be seen to add to the complexity of their work.

The focus

The investigation examined the impact of the incorporation of literacy and numeracy into the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training by asking the following research questions:

1. What views/concepts of literacy and numeracy underpin the training package?
2. What are the issues involved in incorporating literacy and numeracy into the training package?
3. What understanding about literacy and numeracy is held by trainers involved in the delivery of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training and participants in such training, at one particular site? How does literacy and numeracy get talked about in the delivery of the training package at one particular site? Is it an issue for the trainer, for the participants? What resources are suggested or used to support the incorporation of literacy and numeracy into training and assessment?
4. Has the inclusion of literacy and numeracy into the training package made any difference to the delivery of the training in comparison to the previous Certificate IV in Workplace Trainer Category 2?
5. How do people obtain the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training (ie modes of delivery, cost, duration)?

A number of techniques were used to collect data to answer these questions:

- Interviews/discussions/meetings were held with key informants from both urban and regional NSW.
- Observations were made of the delivery of four Units of Competency from the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training by an urban registered training provider. These units were delivered in two, three-day workshops:

  Observation 1: BSZ404A Train Small Groups

  Observation 2: BSZ401A Plan Assessment
  BSZ402A Conduct Assessment
  BSZ403A Review Assessment

Informal discussions were also held with participants in the workshops.

- A phone survey of a small number of registered training organisations was done to determine cost, modes of delivery and length of time taken to gain the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training.

The data was collected over a six month period, from July 1999 to December 1999.

Findings

It must be stressed that this is a small research project with a small sample of informants and providers under study. The findings can not be generalised across providers.

However, a number of observations can be made under the following headings:

Significant variety in provision

There is great variety in the way that people can gain the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training qualification. There is a significant difference in cost, length of time taken and modes of delivery across sites.

Quality a concern

The variety of provision leads to the issue of quality control which some informants maintain is a significant issue; others claim that it is not so important because local networks will sort out the quality providers. There is also a sense in some quarters that the 'bit of paper' is all that matters. The role of the State Training Authority in monitoring quality was also raised as an issue. Some informants see a need for some form of moderation of assessment and suggest that VETAB could monitor this;

others suggest that this is not VETAB's role as its registration procedures ensure quality processes are in place. However, more searching questions about moderation could be included in the registration process.

Self-identified skills gap

Another major finding was the perceived skills gap between trainers and assessors with the previous qualifications (Category 1 and Category 2 Workplace Trainer) and what is required for the new qualification, particularly in the area of awareness of literacy and numeracy, but also in the area of assessment in general. Some providers see a real need for professional development. For example, one rural provider is developing an 18 hour professional development course, which includes a literacy and numeracy awareness component. The course is designed to bridge the self identified skills gap of its trainers and assessors who hold the previous Workplace Trainer and Assessor qualification and who wish to gain the Certificate IV qualification.

Need for resources

Trainers and assessors appear thirsty for support materials to provide them with strategies and ideas, but do not seem to be aware of the resources that are available either through ANTA or the National Assessors and Workplace Trainers Body (NAWTB) website. The particular provider being observed in this study made no mention of any literacy and numeracy support materials. The non-endorsed component of the training package was eagerly awaited by many providers. However, it only became available at the end of 1999 so it is too soon to judge its impact.

Little change in delivery and awareness of literacy and numeracy issues

The inclusion of literacy and numeracy into the training package has not resulted in any major change in the way that the content of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training was delivered by the particular provider under observation.

The training at this site did not provide participants with any greater awareness of literacy and numeracy as issues to be considered in their training and assessment. Nor did it suggest strategies for dealing with literacy and numeracy in their workplace. Only trainers and assessors who already had some experience of literacy and numeracy, usually through WELL projects, were aware of the importance of considering literacy and numeracy in their work.

Confusion about the term 'training package'

The term 'training package' has led to a great deal of confusion. Many trainers assume that a *training* package will provide a script for training, that it will include suggestions or directions as to what and when to deliver the training. This is obviously not what the new training packages are. Perhaps a less confusing name that highlighted the assessment or standards aspect of the package would have resulted in an easier implementation process.

Importance of customisation

The necessity of customising the training package to suit specific industries and contexts was stressed by a number of informants. The most successful training packages are those that are the most specific to a particular industry or enterprise.

The changing role of the trainer

Changes in vocational education stemming from the National Training Framework have resulted in dramatic changes in the role of trainers and assessors. Trainers are now required to be aware of literacy and numeracy, and know how to account for it in their training and assessments. As well they need to shift from a focus on training to a focus on assessment, with an accompanying shift from measurement-driven assessment to evidence-gathering assessment. This is a significant cultural shift for many trainers and assessors and requires professional development.

Screening out

There is anecdotal evidence that companies who have invested a lot of time and money into language, literacy and numeracy programs, often with WELL funding, are now finding it more efficient to use recruitment screens to exclude people with low levels of English language, literacy and numeracy skills.

Conclusions and issues arising

The following conclusions can be drawn from the study and have been grouped under two major headings:

Quality issues in terms of content (ie literacy and numeracy awareness)

The literacy and numeracy awareness of trainers and assessors is currently insufficient to carry out the reforms of the NTF. Awareness of literacy and numeracy as important issues, and strategies for dealing with literacy and numeracy in training and assessments, needs to be made explicit in the Certificate IV training. It is important that rich, complex definitions and understandings of literacy and numeracy are used, rather than narrow, reductionist, deficit understandings. How and when this training would occur remains problematic as providers are already labouring under time constraints in delivering training and conducting assessments.

Participants in training programs need to be referred to current resources and support materials to provide them with strategies and guidelines for incorporating literacy and numeracy awareness into their assessment and training. There appears to be a need for greater awareness and dissemination of existing materials.

Quality issues in terms of processes

There is a need for some form of moderation to ensure parity between assessors and RTOs. This could perhaps be part of the role of Assessor Networks. It was also suggested that VETAB could include more detailed questions about moderation in its registration procedures, eg how, and how frequently, moderation exercises would be carried out by the provider.

Ensuring the quality of delivery of the Certificate across providers was also seen as an issue. The variety of time taken, cost and mode of delivery was seen as resulting in varying skill levels of assessors and trainers, with no guarantee about standards. It is not clear however whose responsibility it is to monitor such standards. There is a belief in some quarters that the 'market' will distinguish the high quality providers from the low quality providers when it becomes apparent that the assessor or trainer does not have the necessary skills to do the job. However this 'sorting' could take some time. The suggestion was made that it is time to establish an 'Education ITAB' which could take responsibility for such issues.

Further research

A number of topics arose for further research in this area. These include:

- The tracking of an assessor/trainer who completed the Certificate IV during this study and observe them doing assessments and training in their workplace, taking note of the way in which they do, or do not, incorporate literacy and numeracy into their assessments/training.
- The development of models of good practice in assessment and training which incorporate literacy and numeracy awareness.
- An evaluation of the 18 hour bridging course being developed by a particular RTO to meet the perceived skills gap of its assessors and trainers in the area of training packages in general, and literacy and numeracy in particular, to determine its usefulness as a model for other RTOs to follow.
- A national survey of the way the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training is delivered (modes, cost, duration) and how literacy and numeracy are addressed in that delivery.

Recommendations

The following recommendations arose from the data:

1. That professional development, as part of ANTA's long term strategy, be given immediate priority in the implementation of training packages, particularly the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training.
2. That state training authorities require RTOs to demonstrate how they are going to include literacy and numeracy awareness into their delivery of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, and by implication, all training packages.
3. That state training authorities require RTOs to demonstrate how they are going to include strategies for dealing with literacy and numeracy into their delivery of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training.
4. That state training authorities require RTOs to demonstrate how they are going to moderate assessments to ensure parity with other providers.
5. That state training authorities require RTOs to demonstrate their knowledge of current resources and how they are going to ensure their trainers and assessors have access to them.

6. That ANTA initiate the establishment of an 'Education ITAB' to regulate and monitor the standards of workplace trainers and assessors to improve quality and ensure parity of qualifications across providers.
7. That ANTA consider a re-naming of 'training packages' to more accurately reflect their content, ie 'Standards or Assessment package'.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Project description and background

The purpose of the project was to investigate the impact of the inclusion of literacy and numeracy into the standards of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, which is part of the training package for Assessment and Workplace Training.

The investigation included interviews with key informants; meetings and discussions with stakeholders, and participant observation of the delivery of 4 Units of Competency from the Certificate IV. Questions were asked about awareness of literacy and numeracy, about issues relating to the incorporation of literacy and numeracy into the standards and about resources used to support this incorporation.

The project was funded by ANTA and DETYA through the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium (ALNARC) and contributes to a national project which was commissioned by ANTA 'to investigate the implementation of training packages and the effects of the inclusion of literacy and numeracy in industry standards in training packages'.

Each state selected a particular training package to investigate. The NSW ALNARC centre chose the Assessment and Workplace Training package because it spans all industries and it can be argued that if assessors and trainers are required to take account of language, literacy and numeracy in their assessments and training then they need to be made aware of such issues and given strategies and tools for dealing with them in their own training. Ideally, these strategies and tools would be included in the delivery of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training qualification.

1.2 Background to training reform

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, Australia experienced major reforms and restructuring of the economy and of industry, in part led by a need for the economy to modernise and to seek expansion through export markets. This is often talked about as the increased integration of the Australian economy with global markets. In order to compete in these global markets, Australian industry had to become more internationally

competitive. In more specific terms this meant facilitating and supporting advances and introducing improved technologies, pushes for increased productivity, an emphasis on 'best practice' and quality assurance, 'leaner' workforces, support from unions for more rewarding and satisfying employment and new ways of organising work patterns (NSDC 1995, p. 11). Such labour market and workplace reforms adhere to a general principle of what Marginson (1997) calls 'market liberalisation'. Others in Australia have called this economic rationalism while in international circles this is known more generally as neoliberalism. Such initiatives demanded that vocational education and training also change in order to be compatible and supportive of the broader objectives of industry restructuring. Hence the need for training reform.

Training reform can be divided into two periods. The first is that which occurred under the Federal Labor government and began in the mid to late 1980s driven initially by award restructuring in the Metals and Engineering industries. This is a sector of industry that through its alignment to the manufacturing base in the Australian economy has been very powerful and formative in its influences and flow-ons to other sections of industry. The training reforms during this period were known as the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA).

The National Training Reform Agenda

The training materials developed by the National Staff Development Committee (NSDC, 1995, pg. 13) for the Commonwealth of Australia state the goals of the NTRA as being:

- changes to the nature and quality of education and training
- a move to competency based training
- greater flexibility in how, when and where training is offered
- recognition of, and credit for the existing skills of trainees
- the application of equity and social justice principles to all areas of training
- a more customer centred approach.

Others summarised the NTRA as having five general themes:

1. nationally consistent competency based training
2. national recognition of competencies however attained
3. an open training market
4. fair participation in vocational education and training
5. an integrated entry level system.

(Curtain 1994; Lundberg 1994; Brown & Rushbrook 1995, p. 21-24 cited in Brown 2000).

The National Training Framework

The second period of reform is that which has occurred since 1996 under the more conservative Federal Coalition government. The economic reforms of the Labor predecessor can be termed 'neoliberalism with heart' because it is generally recognised that these market based reforms occurred alongside such things as safety nets in industrial relations thus showing some consideration for social justice issues. In contrast, the period of the conservative coalition has been solely about increased competitiveness and guided by the neoliberal belief that the market if left to its own devices will reflect the true nature of efficient economics. Under such arrangements increasing competitiveness will ensure efficiency. Another aspect of neoliberalism bound up with this is the downsizing of the public sector and opening those aspects previously covered by the state to open competition. Downsizing in this sector is often accompanied by explanations like 'ensuring less interference' so that the market can operate at its true level. In addition this has led to different kinds of practices like the setting up of minimum processes and quality assurance checks rather than more thorough procedures, templates and processes.

The Federal Coalition government came to power in March 1996. In July of that same year, a meeting of Commonwealth, State and Territory Training Ministers agreed to establish an industry-led committee called the National Training Framework Committee (NTFC). This committee was given responsibility to oversee the policy framework for the development and endorsement of competency standards and training packages. In November 1996 the same ministers endorsed the major features of the National Training Framework (NTF). The two main features of the framework are:

- *Revised and simplified arrangements for the recognition of training organisations and training products assuring quality of training provision; and*
- *Training Packages which integrate nationally available training products including new assessment arrangements with competency standards.*

(ANTA 1997, p. 1 cited in Brown 2000)

This framework was designed to make the training system and regulatory arrangements simpler and more flexible, in line with the neoliberal agenda of smaller government, less government intervention and shifting training arrangements back to employers. The *Guidelines for the Development of Training Packages* was published by ANTA (1996) and the first training

packages were endorsed by the NTFC in July 1997.

Training packages

Training packages are a crucial element in the Australian government's policy to streamline the training process under the National Training Framework. The other key element is the Australian Recognition Framework.

Training packages according to ANTA are consistent and reliable sets of nationally endorsed components for training, recognising and assessing people's skills (McKenna 1998; ANTA 1999).

> *Training packages provide the basic building blocks for vocational education and training programs. They bring together, through one industry managed process, the previously disconnected approaches to standards, programs, qualifications and learning resources, creating a comprehensive toolkit for learning and assessment leading to nationally recognised qualifications.*
>
> (Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training 1998 p. 6)

Training packages consist of an endorsed, and a non-endorsed component. The endorsed component consists of the competency standards, assessment guidelines and qualifications. The non-endorsed component, consisting of learning strategies, assessment materials and professional development materials, does not require endorsement by the NTFC. This is where RTOs can exercise their competitive edge in the training market by customising their materials to meet particular industry or enterprise needs. Recently, as an indication of ANTA's sensitivity to and understanding of language and labelling, the non-endorsed component has been renamed as 'Support Materials'. An example of these 'Support Materials' is NAWTB's recently published Facilitator's Pack which is discussed in Chapter 3, under the heading 'Resources'.

1.3 Background to the training package in Assessment and Workplace Training

Workplace Training and Assessment had been growing in importance under the reform agendas outlined above. Subsequently, competency standards were written for both Workplace Trainers and for Assessors. Initially these were separate from one another and later combined under the Training Package. Both areas underwent major revisions and rewrites. During this time, there were variations between what providers delivered

in their 'Train the Trainer' courses in terms of content, duration and cost which led to concerns about quality and parity between providers. Similar concerns have been raised about the current training package and are discussed in Chapter 3 under the heading 'Issues'.

The following timeline gives an historical overview of the development of the standards for Workplace Trainers and Assessors which demonstrates the origins of the current training package.

June 1991	The National Training Board (NTB) endorses a Competency Standards Body (CSB) for Workplace Trainers which was given the primary responsibility for developing competency standards for Workplace Trainers.
10th April 1992	The NTB endorses a set of competency standards developed by the CSB after wide consultation. The standards were published and disseminated widely throughout industry. A major innovation associated with this project was the distinction that was drawn between Category 1 and Category 2 Workplace Trainers. Category 1 was for people who were involved in the training of others but for whom training was not the major focus of their job. Category 2 was for those for whom training was the major focus of their work and who were involved in the broader training functions.
1992	A project was initiated to develop competency standards for assessment because assessment of competency was becoming a major issue both on-the-job and within VET courses. In a similar way to Category 1 Workplace Trainers, it was recognised that many people would need to be able to assess workers, not just VET teachers and workplace trainers. Assessment needed to be conducted on-the-job by team leaders and workplace peers. To encourage and assist this proliferation of assessment, it was agreed that the minimum qualification that these people would need would be competency with the job and specific training in conducting assessments. The CSB for Workplace Trainers was expanded and re-named the CSB - Assessors and Workplace Trainers.
February 1993	The NTB endorses the first set of competency standards for Assessors which is published and disseminated.
30th June 1994	The NTB endorses new competency standards for Workplace Trainers which have been revised to bring them into alignment with the Assessors' competency standards. This was particularly important for

	the Category 2 standards. The separating out of the Assessment standards saw the number of Units of Competency for the Category 2 Workplace Trainer reduce from seven to four.
November 1994	The competency standards for Assessors were reviewed and re-written, expanding from three units to a total of seven and organised and presented using similar logic to that which distinguished Category 1 and Category 2 Workplace Trainers. Four specialist units were developed which depended on the degree and depth that people were involved in the assessment process.
September 1995	The Standards and Curriculum Council, which replaced and took over the responsibilities of the NTB, endorses the new Assessor standards. The Assessor standards were considered to be applicable across all industries. However, while those completing the Category 2 Workplace Trainer were considered to be doing a Certificate IV qualification, the Assessor standards were not aligned to any level of qualification. These competency standards for Assessment allowed for two forms of assessment. The assessment of trainees working on-the-job could be assessed against competency standards in their industry or occupation. Alternatively, trainees could be assessed in educational and training environments using the learning outcomes and assessment criteria aligned to particular modules within accredited programs.

During this time, providers developed different 'Train the Trainer' courses to fit the units of competency. Likewise, the fees incurred by the trainees doing them also showed marked variance. The differences became selling points and a means for consumer/trainee comparison. The lack of a centrally accredited curriculum offered an opportunity to develop competitive advantage between providers. This approach to training programs where they were being developed directly from the competency standards is very similar to the current processes associated with Training Packages. Hence it can be said that the highly competitive training market that developed around 'Train the Trainer' programs and the resulting development of the corresponding training markets were a front runner and proving ground for the design that was to become Training Packages.

However, partly to address the wide variation in the standard, content selection and duration of programs that developed around 'Train the Trainer' courses, a curriculum document was accredited using the VEETAC/ACTRAC template by the Department of Employment Training

and Further Education in South Australia. ACTRAC Products published this in 1995.

The course design for the program consisted of eight modules and a workplace project. The modules and their nominal duration appear below:

1. Adult Learning and Learners (40 hours)
2. Assessor Training (35 hours)
3. The Context of Workplace Training (15 hours)
4. Evaluating Training (15 hours)
5. Preparing and Delivering Training Sessions (50 hours)
6. Preparing Learning Resources (15 hours)
7. Preparing Training Programs (30 hours)
8. Promoting Training (10 hours).

The Workplace Project was of a negotiable length and was included for those who had not had an opportunity to apply their skills and knowledge on the job (ACTRAC 1995, p. 47). This program satisfied the 1994 Category 2 competency standards and the 1993 Assessor Training standards.

Training consultancies were being established that concentrated solely on delivering 'Train the Trainer' and Assessor training programs. So along with the publication of the curriculum/accreditation document, ACTRAC Products developed and marketed training resource materials. These materials were for trainers and trainees involved in the implementation stage and consisted of two folders. The first was full of prepared overhead transparency masters and trainer notes. The second folder was the Participant's Workbook. Shortly after this, a further updated version that incorporated the changes to the Assessor units of competency was published by ACTRAC and ANTA. This was a large binder entitled 'Module Materials'. Such materials made delivery of these programs very straightforward and bordered on representing a teacher/trainer-proof curriculum. Many trainers expect a 'training' package to consist of such materials and are confused by their absence in the new training packages.

One can see from the above overview of the Workplace Trainer and Assessor standards Category 1 and 2, the origins of the current training package. It is also interesting to note that many of the issues that were raised then, in relation to variations between providers and resulting concerns about quality, are also being raised now in relation to the new Certificate IV. Such concerns are discussed in Chapter 3.

1.4 The training package for Assessment and Workplace Training

The training package for Assessment and Workplace Training was endorsed in late 1998 and is to be reviewed in May 2000. It is based on industry consultation and was produced by the National Assessors and Workplace Trainers Body (NAWTB) which grew out of the Competency Standards Body (CSB) for Assessors and Workplace Trainers. NAWTB is a project group of Business Services Training Australia Ltd, with the support of ANTA. The Assessment and Workplace Training competency standards replace the Workplace Trainer Competency standards (current from August 1994 to July 1999) and the Competency Standards for Assessment (current from September 1995 to August 2000). The endorsed component of the training package has a publication date of December 1998, consists of 140 pages and is available for $70.

The Training Package consists of two qualifications:

Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training BSZ40198
Diploma of Training and Assessment Systems BSZ50198

The Certificate IV is designed for people for whom training is a large part of their job. The Diploma is designed for people responsible for designing, implementing, managing and evaluating assessment and training systems.

The Chair of the NAWTB, Brian Kerwood writes in the Foreword to the Package (pg 3) that he believes that it represents a significant evolution in the provision of quality assessment and on-the-job training. He states *that a career path has now been established from Train Small Groups into the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. The new Diploma in Training and Assessment Systems addresses the needs of those responsible for managing the training and assessment systems in organisations.*

The units of competency for the two qualifications are listed below:

Certificate IV Eight units:		Diploma Four units from this group:	
BSZ401A	Plan Assessment	BSZ501A	Analyse Competency Requirements
BSZ402A	Conduct Assessment	BSZ502A	Design and Establish the Training System
BSZ403A	Review Assessment	BSZ503A	Design and Establish the Assessment System
BSZ404A	Train Small Groups	BSZ504A	Manage the Training and Assessment System
BSZ405A	Plan and Promote a Training Program	BSZ505A	Evaluate the Training and Assessment System
BSZ406A	Plan a Series of Training Sessions	BSZ506A	Develop Assessment Procedures
BSZ407A	Deliver Training Sessions	BSZ507A	Develop Assessment Tools
BSZ408A	Review Training	BSZ508A	Design Training Courses

Plus six units from the Certificate IV and three relevant units which may come from financial management, project management or human resource management competencies at Diploma level.

The most striking feature of the Diploma is that the four Units that are system-focused are clearly aimed at those who are involved in the management function relating to Assessment and Workplace Training. Arguably the other four involve tasks that can be done either by managers or advanced practitioners. The competency standards in the Training Package have been criticised for being unrepresentative of how workplace training, learning and assessment occurs in smaller businesses. Harris & Simons in recent research have found that the standards in this package are based upon assumptions about training, and the training role that are still yet to be seriously questioned. The standards:

> *are characterised by a notion of training that is formal, structured, delivered, assessed, recorded and certified. ... [with] an overwhelming emphasis on **training** rather than **facilitating learning**, and formalised on-site training is still valued almost to the exclusion of informal and incidental learning processes.*
>
> (Harris & Simons 1999)

Their research raises numerous questions about the suitability of the standards for the way that learning and training occurs in the workplace especially in small and micro business settings.

The Diploma obviously requires higher order competencies than the Certificate. However one of the informants in this research was concerned that much of the underpinning knowledge that is required of these higher order competencies has been skated over or lost in the establishment of the Diploma. She suggested that at Diploma level there is a requirement for theory, readings, analysis and synthesis of ideas and information; that this is the sort of underpinning knowledge that is required to design, manage or evaluate assessment and training programs. However this does not appear to have been acknowledged in the training package which presents the competencies as discrete and reductionist.

This particular research project focuses on the Certificate IV, rather than the Diploma.

1.5 Levels of literacy and numeracy within the training package

It became clear in the research that there are three levels at which awareness of literacy and numeracy need to be considered in this particular training package. Firstly, at the level of the presenter delivering the training and conducting assessments that result in an RTO awarding the Certificate IV. If literacy and numeracy are to be incorporated effectively into training packages, and not just paid lip service to, then presenters' own awareness of literacy and numeracy as issues and how they deal with them in their delivery of the training for the Certificate, is important. This is the subject of the observation of one RTO site, described in Chapter 3. Secondly, there is the literacy and numeracy competence of the trainer/assessors themselves (ie those seeking to gain the Certificate IV). And thirdly, there is the literacy and numeracy competence of the workers being trained or assessed.

At the second level, the literacy and numeracy skills required of the trainer/assessor are significant. In order to obtain the Certificate IV qualification, one needs sophisticated literacy and numeracy skills which are specified in the Evidence Guide of each Unit of Competency under 'Required knowledge and skills'. Below is an example of one Unit. (Other Units of Competency that were the subject of the observations have been included in Appendix I.)

For **BSZ401A Plan Assessment**, one needs language, literacy and numeracy skills to:

- *read and interpret relevant information to plan assessment*
- *give clear and precise information/instructions in spoken or written form*
- *adjust spoken and written language to suit target audience*
- *write assessment tools using language which mirrors that used to demonstrate the competency in the specific context*
- *prepare required documentation using clear and comprehensible language and layout*
- *calculate and estimate costs*

(Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training BSZ98, 1998, p. 37)

These are complex, literacy and numeracy skills requiring metacognitive as well as cognitive skills, and in some cases there is a merging of literacy and communication skills. There is evidence to suggest that some trainers/assessors do not in fact, have such sophisticated skills. An example was given by one of the key informants of someone in the meat industry who is an excellent trainer, but has not the necessary literacy skills to complete the certificate. In this case the assessment cannot be customised to suit their needs because the competencies require that one can read, understand and analyse documents (Informant 9). A further example was given of some trainers/assessors on mine sites who have literacy problems themselves (Informant 3).

It should be noted that reading training packages requires particular skills in comprehension and interpretation which come from training and experience. Many trainers and assessors apparently don't read the training package itself, but rely on the RTO to have read it. This particular training package is thought by some informants to be difficult to read and understand because of the density of the text and the amount of repetition in it. There was a suggestion made at the ALNARC Forum (February 17, 2000) that it needs to be 'plain Englished'. Informant 5 believes that one needs experience at reading and interpreting standards and that this training package is fairly typical:

these are standard, no better or worse than others. Typical.

However he goes on to ask who the audience for the training package is meant to be:

Who's it supposed to be used by?... By all those people in the training groups; half can understand this language, half cannot. You

cannot fix that in 7-10 weeks. It takes 3 years, if ever. The document cannot be used by the practitioners of the industry. Its audience is very broad and varied. It's been written for the top end of the audience. Written for people with an academic background to training as opposed to people with an industry background to training. They're the people [ie industry] we're supposed to be serving.

As mentioned previously, the training package is to be reviewed in 2000 and perhaps such comments can be taken into consideration.

The third level at which literacy and numeracy operates within this training package is where trainer/assessors need to consider the literacy and numeracy skills of the workers they are training or assessing. The training package specifies what this might mean in very general terms in the Range of Variables and in the Evidence Guide for each Unit of Competency:

Range of Variables

The assessment system should specify ...

any allowable adjustments to the assessment method which may be made ...

Allowable adjustments may include ...

provision of personal support services (eg. Auslan interpreter, reader, interpreter, attendant carer, scribe) ...

Characteristics of persons being assessed may include

language, literacy and numeracy needs ...

Evidence Guide

Assessment requires evidence of the following processes to be provided:

How the assessment was planned to ensure that language, literacy and numeracy issues were taken into consideration ...

(Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training BSZ98, 1998, p. 42, 44, 63)

The above is an example of how literacy and numeracy have been incorporated into a training package. There is an assumption that the process of considering the literacy and numeracy needs of a person being assessed is a straightforward, simple one and that by writing it into the Range of Variables etc will help to solve the problem. However, this research found little evidence of increased awareness of literacy and

numeracy issues as a result of the incorporation of literacy and numeracy into the training package, either on the part of presenters delivering the Certificate IV, or participants undertaking such training.

The next chapter outlines the methodology used to gather data about the incorporation of literacy and numeracy into the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 The research questions

The following research questions framed the investigation of the training package (the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training):

1. What views/concepts of literacy and numeracy underpin the training package?
2. What are the issues involved in incorporating literacy and numeracy into the training package?
3. What understanding about literacy and numeracy is held by trainers and participants? How does literacy and numeracy get talked about in the delivery of the training package at one particular site? Is it an issue for the trainer, for the participants? What resources are suggested or used to support the incorporation of literacy and numeracy into training and assessment?
4. Has the inclusion of literacy and numeracy into the training package made any difference to the delivery of the training in comparison to the previous Certificate IV in Workplace Trainer Category 2?
5. How do people obtain the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training (ie modes of delivery, cost, duration)?

Data was gathered from three main sources to answer these questions:

- interviews with 9 key informants and discussions with 4 stakeholder groups
- observation of an RTO (including document analysis of the training manuals and an interview with one trainer)
- phone survey

2.2 Interviews/meetings/discussions with key informants

One of the key sources of data was interviews, meetings and discussions with key informants from urban and regional NSW. The informants came from industry, RTOs, the NAWTB, Framing the Future projects, the VET Assessor Network and the ALNARC February 2000 Forum. A list of the organisations that key informants came from is listed in Appendix II. Individual names have not been included, so that confidentiality can be maintained. Informants are referred to by number in the body of the

report. (The numbers are not in the order in which organisations are listed.) Information from the interviews and meetings is reported in Chapter 3, organised according to the research questions.

Interviews

Interviews were held with a number of key informants in Sydney. They were approximately one hour long and tape-recorded. Care has been taken to preserve informants' anonymity by referring to them by number rather than by name.

Framing the Future

Framing the Future is a major staff development initiative of ANTA which supports people in the VET sector who are involved in implementing the NTF.

Two Framing the Future projects provided rich sources of data for questions 2-5 in particular. The researcher attended meetings of both projects and conducted discussions with participants.

The first project (FTF1) aimed at analysing the requirements for competence in the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training, particularly the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. Its particular focus was on:

- the critical function of assessment within training packages
- the trialling of flexible delivery systems to support assessment processes in the workplace, and
- the changing role of the trainer/assessor in the National Training Framework.

Participants in the group came from metropolitan RTOs as well as one rural RTO.

What was of particular interest to this project was the work done by one participant on identifying gaps between the previous Certificate IV in Workplace Training (Category 2) and the current Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. Each unit of competency and performance criteria from the new certificate was cross matched to learning outcomes and assessment criteria from the old certificate. Trainers and assessors were consulted about their knowledge of training packages (content and implementation) and how to integrate literacy awareness and strategy development into training delivery. The results of the matching exercise and the consultation informed the development of a professional development bridging course which the RTO will run in 2000.

The second Framing the Future project (FTF2) to provide data for this project was designed to investigate opportunities, issues and needs for adult English language, literacy and numeracy teachers with the implementation of training packages and in particular the integration of Workplace Communication competencies.

Participants in this group came from 5 regions across NSW. Two regions investigated the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training.

VET Assessor Network

The VET Assessor Network, an initiative of the Vocational Education and Assessment Centre (VEAC) was launched on December 6, 1999. Participants at the breakfast meeting came from various TAFE institutes, NSW DET, various ITABs, OTEN, various Educational Services Divisions of TAFE, the NSW Fire Brigade and the Corrective Services Academy. The meeting was addressed by Tess Julian, Executive Officer of NAWTB.

ALNARC Forum

ALNARC conducted a forum in Melbourne, 17 February 2000, to report on the results of its research-to-date. Participants came from industry bodies, RTOs, both private and public, and universities. Participants in the workshop held by the NSW ALNARC Centre were asked to respond to the interim findings of this report, to confirm or disagree with the issues and concerns raised, and to suggest recommendations and ideas for future research.

2.3 Participant observation of one RTO

Two participant observations were conducted of an RTO delivering the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. The RTO was selected from the NAWTB website list of providers.

Two three-day workshops were observed:

1. 'Workplace Assessment' which consists of three units of competency from the Training Package: BSZ401A Plan Assessment, BSZ402A Conduct Assessment and BSZ403A Review Assessment.
2. 'Train the Trainer: Workplace Training' which is the unit of competency BSZ404A Train Small Groups in the Training Package,

The RTO who agreed to be observed for the research had been delivering professional training courses for adult learners, designing workplace

education, training programs, competency based standards, competency based training programs, assessment strategies and policies, for over ten years. The qualification it awarded prior to the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training was titled the Certificate IV in Training and Development, and included:

Category 1 Workplace Training
Planning and Presenting Workplace Training Programs Level 2
Training Needs Analysis
Designing Training Programs
Assessing Demonstrated Competencies
Reviewing and Promoting Training

VETAB agreed that the previous certificate more than matched the new certificate (in fact, one module: 'Training Needs Analysis' was removed from the previous Certificate course and placed in the new Diploma course). The RTO started delivering the new certificate in May 1999.

Observation 1

The first observation of 'Workplace Assessment' took place from 1-3 September 1999.

There were 16 participants in the workshop from a variety of workplaces and industries, including a travel company, a consultant working mainly in the public sector, a Leagues Club, the NRMA, a security consultant, a finance trainer with the Department of Defence, P&O Ports, Lever Rexona, the Club and Hotel industry, Freightcorp, James Hardy Industries and a women's refuge. Most participants were new to training and were seeking to gain the necessary qualification because their changing work roles now included an assessment and training component.

Observation 2

The second observation of 'Train the Trainer: Workplace Training' took place from 29th September to 1st October 1999.

There were 15 participants from a variety of workplaces and industries including a large club, the insurance industry, the mining industry, Goodman Fielder, the automotive industry and a private consultant.

Document analysis of the training manuals

Workshop participants were issued with a training manual at each workshop, namely *Workplace Assessment* and *Train the Trainer: Workplace Training*. These manuals formed the framework for the three

day workshops. The manuals were scrutinised for reference to literacy and numeracy.

Interview with a trainer

Two different trainers delivered the workshops that were observed. One of them was interviewed a month later, using the following broad discussion questions:

- how you make use of, or refer to, the actual training package in your delivery
- how you address 'special needs'
- what resources you refer to.

The term 'special needs' was used deliberately to avoid pre-empting literacy and numeracy as the areas under investigation. The interview questions and responses appear in Appendix III. The interview triangulated the data obtained from the observation, the manual and an interview with the course manager (a key informant).

It was originally envisaged that follow-up observations of a participant from the workshop would be done back in their workplace, to observe how they addressed literacy and numeracy in their assessment. However, it became clear that this was not feasible because of the time delays involved. Participants had two months to complete their assessment task and be awarded the qualification. Until they had received the qualification, they could not conduct assessments in their workplace. This (minimum) delay of two months made a follow-up observation impossible given the deadline for this project.

Phone survey

A small phone survey was conducted in August 1999 of a number of RTOs taken from the NAWTB website. Six providers were randomly selected from this list and telephoned to find out how they delivered the Certificate IV, how long it takes, how much it costs etc.

Chapter 3: Findings and Discussion

The findings from the interviews, meetings, observations and phone survey have been organised under each of the five research questions. First, the finding is summarised, followed by evidence to support the finding and finally, a brief summary discussion. As well, a number of issues and concerns that do not relate directly to the research questions but are nevertheless important, have been included at the end of the chapter.

3.1 Concepts of literacy and numeracy underpinning the training package

In terms of concepts of literacy and numeracy, the early stages of the development of the training package were informed by a Workplace Communication Services, NSW AMES project. The later stages, particularly the non-endorsed component, was informed by ANTA's Workplace Communication in Training Packages Project. Material about literacy and numeracy and adult learning has been included in the Facilitator's Pack, the non-endorsed component of the training package, which was released towards the end of November, 1999 and is currently being distributed. The pack consists of two volumes (red for training, blue for assessment) and information about language, literacy and numeracy appears in the generic section at the beginning of each volume. Language, literacy and numeracy are also referred to throughout the facilitator's guide, the learning options and the unit information in terms of taking them into consideration when training and assessing.

Language, literacy and numeracy are presented as essential elements in the communication process and in work performance. The emphasis is on workplace communication and effective job performance.

> *Literacy is the ability to read and use written information. It means being able to recognise, read and interpret workplace documents and signs and write what is required in order to do your job accurately and efficiently.*
>
> *Numeracy involves being able to carry out mathematical operations that may be part of one's job. It includes knowing when to use maths, what maths to use and how to do it.*
>
> (Facilitator's Pack 1999 p. 44)

At all stages, literacy and numeracy are contextualised in workplace practice. Facilitators are urged to remember that the literacy and numeracy demands of the training should not exceed those required of the job and that assessment tasks are not more demanding in terms of literacy and numeracy than the job itself. A number of useful suggestions are made as to how to modify training and assessments to suit participants with specific language, literacy and numeracy needs.

Thus the concepts of literacy and numeracy that underpin the training package are very much located in the workplace and the job at hand, and operate predominantly at the level of the individual's communication skills rather than the workplace or organisation's communication processes. In these documents there is little suggestion of a broader notion of critical literacy which uses language skills to critique and question, to query why texts are constructed in certain ways and to notice what has been left out (Access ESD 1999, p. 4). Other ANTA publications such as *Built in - not bolted on* (Wignall 1998) and *A new assessment tool* (Goulborn & Alexander 1998) provide useful questions about the purpose of communication in the workplace drawing on aspects of communication as identified in the National Reporting System (NRS). These aspects overlap and include: procedural communication for performing tasks, technical communication for using technology, personal communication for expressing identity, cooperative communication for interacting in groups, systems communication for interacting in organisations and public communication for interacting with the wider community. Such broad orientations to communication suggest the range of domains of social activity (www.nrs.detya.gov.au, accessed 28.2.00). They are not discrete, building blocks but complex, interacting social practices. A broad concept of literacy and numeracy includes all aspects of communication, not only those operating in a workplace.

3.2 Issues involved in incorporating literacy and numeracy into the training package

A number of issues were identified by key informants (RTOs, the Framing the Future projects and individual stakeholders). These include:

- significant variety in delivery of the Certificate
- concerns about quality
- moderation issues
- RPL and credit transfers
- currency of qualifications
- skills gap
- resources

Similar issues were identified at the breakfast launch of the VET Assessor Network, an initiative of the Vocational Education and Assessment Centre (VEAC) on 6 December 1999. Participants were asked to identify significant issues that they now face in assessment and came up with the following list which is almost identical to the one above; further confirmation that these are significant issues:

- *Consistency of assessment results - between assessors, between providers*
- *Quality - interpretation of standards, inconsistency in training and qualifications between RTOs, consistency of assessment quality, customisation*
- *Money/time/resources for assessment*
- *Need for a cultural shift from measurement to an evidence based model*
- *Evidence - what? how much? over what period? authenticity of simulation*
- *Record keeping - for how long? linked to quality of the training/assessment system*
- *Language, literacy and numeracy - lack of assessor experience, need strategies and techniques for appropriate assessment which does not place excessive LLN demands on 'assessee'*
- *Role of assessors in the workplace - often not their core role. Their knowledge and experience, and the support they receive, are quality concerns*
- *Recognition of Prior Learning - listed as a concern by many participants*

(www.veac.org.au/assessnet)

The participants at the ALNARC Forum workshop (February 17, 2000) also confirmed the significance of these issues. As well, they raised concerns that the document itself (the training package) is difficult to understand because of the way it is written. It is dense and repetitive and needs 'plain Englishing'.

Significant variety in delivery of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training

There are a range of providers, ranging from private to public, from small to large, who deliver the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training in a variety of ways. Modes of delivery, duration and cost all vary significantly.[1] This variety in provision has led to concerns about parity between providers and leads to concerns about standards and maintaining the quality and integrity of the qualification. It is unclear however, how those standards can be guaranteed:

> *Like any qualification the worth of it is in the work that's done as a result of having that bit of paper, not the bit of paper and that cannot be guaranteed.* (Informant 5)

Quality issues

The variety of provision leads to the issue of quality control which some informants maintain is a significant issue. Others claim that it is not so important because local networks will sort out the quality providers. There is also a sense in some quarters that the 'bit of paper' is all that matters.

There were varied responses to the question of whose role it is to ensure quality. Some informants believe it is the role of RTOs themselves; others that of state training authorities; others see it as the ITAB's role; others as ANTA's role. One informant claimed that VETAB's registration procedures already ensure quality processes are in place; that VETAB is fulfilling its role to implement the recognition framework standards and that it was up to RTOs to implement those standards. However, others claim that these procedures only ensure potential to deliver, rather than being based on outcomes of delivery.

> *VETAB signs off on 'capability' not actuality* (Informant 7)

At the moment it is *easy to comply with the RTO compliance because it is input rather than outcome-based* (Clive Graham, quoted in Osmond, 1999, May, p. 6).

1 Details of such variations are given later in the chapter under the heading 'Obtaining the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training'.

Concerns about quality have been reinforced recently by ANTA itself in its recommendations to the Ministerial Council (MINCO) *to focus on quality assurance aspects of the national training system* (Osmond, 2000, Feb, p. 10). The recently released Schofield report into traineeships in Tasmania also expressed concerns about RTO compliance auditing (op cit).

A number of informants stressed the importance of networks to act as informal monitoring bodies which would eventually 'weed out' the quality providers from the more suspect ones. However the point was also made that such networks operate at the grass roots level without support:

> *Big conferences - spotlight on this and spotlight on that; networks trying to moderate, eg if you're up in the Hunter valley for example, a provider who's not doing the right thing, you're going to be singled out, if you're not participating in these networks, exposing yourself to moderation ... that's going to get out.* (Informant 1)

Some informants saw a need in terms of quality control for some form of moderation of assessment and suggested that VETAB could monitor this but would need to include more searching questions about moderation in the registration process.

Summary discussion

Concerns about quality issues were raised by the majority of informants. This led to discussions about the importance of external moderation procedures. Ultimately it was seen as being ANTA's responsibility to ensure that controls are in place to monitor the outcomes of the provision of vocational education and training. A suggestion was made at the ALNARC Forum that it is time to establish an 'Education ITAB' which would be the appropriate body to establish and maintain quality control systems that include moderation exercises across providers.

Moderation

The inadequacy of moderation processes was raised by a number of informants, including participants at the VET Assessor Network launch and the ALNARC Forum. For some, the term 'moderation' refers to a specific and detailed process to compare judgements made by a range of assessors for the same assessment event. The more general issue of ensuring that outcomes are reliable and consistent may be better described by using the term 'verification'. (www.veac.org.au/assessnet)

Informant 1 saw VETAB having a role in monitoring and moderation. Existing quality procedures were seen to be inadequate.

> *They use standard quality assurance procedures. RTOs just have to*

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show that they have standards, policies, but need more refined questions about moderation - how many moderation meetings do they have, show a sample of how you do a moderation, show examples of assessments that have been moderated by others, which system do you use?

The comment was also made that the increased numbers of contract staff being used by RTOs made moderation exercises more difficult.

Summary discussion

Most informants believed that a more formal approach to moderation and verification needs to be taken to ensure parity and consistency of assessments. The establishment of a regulating body, such as an 'Education ITAB', was seen by some informants as the solution to some of these concerns.

RPL and credit transfer

The inconsistency of standards from one provider to another was another area of concern reported by a number of informants. They suggested that qualifications from one provider may not necessarily be the same as qualifications from another provider, despite the 'bit of paper'. In order to ensure that an RTOs own standards are met *an organisation might want to ask for supplementary evidence for its own sake ... even though officially a straight credit transfer means just that, you don't need to see evidence*. There is a belief that some less scrupulous private colleges are not concerned about quality issues - *the bit of paper's all they want* (FTF1).

However, some private providers are also expressing concerns about the mutual recognition of qualifications when it comes to credit transfers from one provider to another, about the 'quality' of the qualification they are having to credit. They believe in some cases that the recipient does not have the 'competence' that the piece of paper says they have (Anderson, 16.12.99).

Similar perceptions of unethical practices by some providers were also found in the Schofield review carried out in Tasmania on traineeships. Although there was not sufficient evidence to support such perceptions (of unethical practices), the anecdotal evidence is damaging to the quality of the traineeship system (Osmond, 2000, Jan., p. 1).

Summary discussion

The issue is not about RPL itself, but about the problem of ensuring that the outcomes of one provider's RPL procedures equate with the outcomes of another provider's RPL procedures. Employers and providers are

seeking assurance that RPL procedures are rigorous and thorough and result in consistency of assessments leading to consistency in the awarding of the qualification. Again, this is an issue of monitoring standards and procedures, and making sure that providers supply enough detail of their procedures to allow for accurate assessments of their performance.

Currency

There is currently no regulatory system to ensure that trainers and assessors have current qualifications. At the moment trainers can demonstrate currency through self assessment, mentoring, coaching, a one-day refresher course or attendance at network meetings. There is no 'standard' or monitoring of currency.

People with the previous Certificate IV in Workplace Trainer Category 2 are encouraged or recommended (by NAWTB) to participate in professional development activities to make sure their competencies are current.

Summary discussion

As with many previous issues, currency is largely about self-monitoring. There is no formal process in place to ensure that trainers and assessors have current experience and qualifications. Individual providers are expected to maintain their own standards and ensure that their staff are up-to-date.

Skills gap

Another major finding was the skills gap between trainers and assessors with the previous qualifications (Category 1 and Category 2 Workplace Trainer) and what is required for the new qualification, particularly in the area of literacy and numeracy awareness, but also in the area of assessment in general.

Informant 5 acknowledged that there are a *large number of qualified assessors & trainers, assessors in particular, who are not sufficiently skilled in competency based assessment to do a valid and reliable job.*

Similarly, Informant 1 believes that:

> *the skills gap is enormous in interpreting competencies. Trainers/assessors should be able to take the competencies, look at their learners and decide how to get them to achieve the competencies ... shouldn't be waiting for the resources to come out (the non-endorsed stuff). Trainers should be able to look at the*

entering behaviour and needs of their learners. Need more time and staff development to take them from where they're at to where they need to be. Competency standards are meant for people in industry. There's a problem with the whole concept. It's difficult getting people off the job one day a week (for classroom based training) but it's also difficult assessing them on the job too. There are usually other people around; it may be noisy etc. There is a need for moderation. It's okay for tick and flick assessments but at Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training level .... need more sophisticated assessments.

The FtF1 project also identified assessors with the old qualification who are not confident to carry out the 'new' assessments and many in fact don't have the skills.

There is a belief that training packages are different to the Cat 1 & 2 ... trainers aren't confident about the administration/record keeping or about interpreting the competencies.

Trainers, as well as assessors, are also becoming aware of gaps in their skills:

Industry specialists now have to be training experts as well, but don't feel confident about writing learning guides etc. (FtF2)

In relation to literacy and numeracy awareness, it became clear that the experience and expertise of the trainer/assessor is crucial to whether or not literacy and numeracy are raised at all. Unless a trainer is aware of these issues, then they will remain hidden, whether or not they are written into the training package. As one respondent said:

I'm not going to change just because it's written in there. If it doesn't come up in practice, I'm not going to do it. In some ways I'm already doing it through customised adjustments for particular learners. (Informant 5).

However, experienced literacy and numeracy teachers know that literacy and numeracy underpin many skills and are embedded in many competencies. That they are not seen by the trainer/assessor does not mean that they are not there, just that the awareness is not.

... it all depends on the trainer ...

There was a lot of time and money spent on getting it right (the incorporation of language, literacy and numeracy) *in the standards, in the writing of the package, but it's really the trainer ... that's where the emphasis should have been ... on the professional development of the trainers. There was not enough dialogue with the*

trainers who were involved in implementing training packages.

(Informant 1)

A number of providers are attempting to fill the skills gap by providing bridging courses which vary, again, from provider to provider, in terms of content, duration and cost.

For example, one regional RTO (FtF1 & 2) has developed an 18 hour program for trainers who were going to deliver the new Certificate IV. The program includes the following modules:

1. Course overview	1 hour
2. Understanding training packages	3 hours
3. Language and literacy considerations in vocational training	5 hours
4. Providing opportunities for practice	3 hours
5. Assessment moderation and validation processes	3 hours
6. Documentation	3 hours

It became apparent during the consultation process that all trainers working with accredited training courses would benefit from the program. Trainers appeared most concerned about their lack of knowledge in relation to training packages (content and implementation) and how to integrate literacy into training delivery. The fee for the program is $165; half of which is to be supported by the RTO's professional development funding allocation.

In contrast, a metropolitan RTO is advertising a 'Workplace Training Category 2 Bridging Course' which promises to cover *the new additions to the qualification. The course includes the latest issues affecting training and the implementation of the new training packages using the endorsed and non-endorsed components.* All of this in two hours, for $65.

Another metropolitan RTO has developed a seven hour professional development workshop which *would provide the opportunity for all participants to meet the competencies not previously met in the Cat 2 course.* The draft program includes:

Problems in Training	1.5 hours
Problems in Assessment	1.5 hours
Practical Session	3 hours
with additional considerations made to the following:	
More detail on training packages	
More detail on moderation	

Information on language and literacy considerations

Broaden participants understanding of flexibility of delivery/information gathering/types of evidence that trainees can use.

The skills gap is not surprising given the fact that quality training and assessment requires experience and expertise which cannot be gained from a two, or seven, or even ten-day workshop. There are no pre-requisites for the Certificate IV courses so the participants vary from very experienced trainers or teachers, with a wealth of prior knowledge, to novices with no experience of training. This is exemplified in the composition of one particular class undertaking the Certificate IV training at a metropolitan RTO. The class consists of:

- *an experienced VETAB officer who's also a consultant*
- *two DET officers who are specialists in traineeships*
- *a private provider with their own college*
- *three experienced VET teachers who already have the old qualification who are making sure they're current*
- *a very experienced trainer who wants the qualification*
- *three who want to set up RTOs with no experience whatsoever of training, assessment or any training system; they're running a business that offers training and want to get it registered*
- *other teachers with old qualifications with no idea of what's going on and who aren't going to change in 10 days*

(Informant 5)

This represents a fairly typical mix of participants. Despite their varying entry level experiences and qualifications, they will probably all emerge with the required 'bit of paper'. Presumably the market then decides on the 'quality' of their performance by employing them.

Summary discussion

The issue of a skills gap is an interesting one because ANTA has stated that the previous Certificate IV in Workplace Trainer Category 2 is equivalent to the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. However, it seems that 'equivalent' may not really mean 'the same', when pressed, as NAWTB states *there are differences and it is up to the RTO to identify any gaps and provide professional development where needed.* (http://www.nawtb.com.au/pub/FaqAnswer.php?resID+2, undated, Accessed 18/11/99).

The implications for professional development are therefore significant. Who monitors whether or not trainers and assessors have the

necessary competencies is a moot point. Who pays for such professional development is also up to the market to decide. As mentioned above, one RTO is committed to paying half the cost of its course, but otherwise it seems to be up to individuals to pay for up-grading their qualifications. With the increasing casualisation of the training field, providers are increasingly moving away from responsibility for staff development.

From the information gathered, it is clear that many workplace trainers and assessors do not have the skills to provide quality training or reliable assessments.

Resources

The issue of resources is slightly anomalous in that trainers and assessors appear thirsty for support materials to provide them with strategies and ideas, but many do not seem to access the resources that are available either through ANTA or NAWTB.

ANTA has produced a number of useful resources through the Workplace Communication in Training Packages project, some of which have been referred to earlier in the report. Three kits in particular are worth mentioning: *Built in not bolted on, Ten fold returns and A new assessment tool*. The kits consist of a booklet and video.

The NAWTB has an extensive list of resources listed on its website including *Resources relevant to 'numeracy'* and *Resources relevant to 'literacy'* with annotations (see Appendix IV for details). Some trainers made use of these, others were unaware of them. One informant who has extensive experience in the area, uses whatever is suitable from NAWTB and his own bank of training materials and customises learning guides to suit particular clients. The Framing the Future website (www@tafe.tas.edu.au) was also used for information about training packages by one provider (FTF1).

In fact, a wealth of resources exist; many are in the process of development and some are about to be released (for example, Access Educational Services Division's 'So you've got your training package .... Now what! Working with language, literacy and numeracy in training packages - some questions and answers'). As well, the Vocational Education and Assessment Centre, located in the Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE, has a number of useful resources to support workplace assessors and trainers (www.veac.org.au). However, there was little awareness on the part of many informants of the range of resources available.

The particular provider being observed in this study made no

mention of any literacy and numeracy support materials. Obviously if the presenter delivering the training is not aware of appropriate resources, then he/she will not direct participants to them.

The non-endorsed component of the training package was eagerly awaited by many providers and became available towards the end of November 1999 and is currently being distributed. It is a 2 volume, comprehensive pack in a flexible format which allows for customisation of the resources to meet the needs of learners. A number of learning options and activities are provided and facilitators are encouraged to select the most appropriate learning and assessment tools for their participants and environments. According to Brain Kerwood, the Chair of NAWTB, the Facilitator's Pack provides *the underpinning information and skill to promote quality and rigour in our learning and assessment systems* (Facilitator's Pack 1999, Foreword). It is too soon to determine what impact these materials are having.

There was some concern expressed, however, about relying too much on resources.

> *Currently in a transition period with no 'curriculum'; once the non-endorsed material appears it will be back to business as usual, ie the 'puppet-in-the-glove' training model, where you're told what to do in the 'curriculum' and you follow the plan; don't need to devise your own materials etc* (FtF1)

Similarly, Informant 1 believed that there was a problem with:

> *waiting for the non-endorsed component. These people (trainers) should be at the pinnacle of people being able to take the competencies and do what's expected of any trainer: These are the competencies; these are your group of learners/workers; how am I going to get them to reach this? Really have a blank piece of paper; shouldn't just script it according to what your resources are; should be looking at where the learning comes from; find out what the entering behaviour and needs of your people are. Waiting for the non-endorsed is making the first fatal error of what a trainer should be doing.*

Not enough time and energy to take them from where they're at, to where they need to be.

Summary discussion

Trainers and assessors express a need for resources but many do not seem aware of what is already available. More work needs to be done through formal and informal channels to inform people of what is available. It

appears to be an issue of awareness and dissemination rather than production.

3.3 Understanding about literacy & numeracy held by trainers & participants at one site

The two observations of one RTO delivering 'Workplace Assessment' and 'Train the Trainer: Workplace Training' revealed that literacy and numeracy were not of particular concern to either the participants or the presenters.

Observations 1 & 2

Participants' understanding of literacy and numeracy

Literacy, understood as *'read and write well'*, was mentioned only once by one participant out of 16 in the three days of observation of the 'Workplace Assessment' workshop. Numeracy was not mentioned at all.

English language was mentioned twice by a participant who came from a manufacturing company with a large number of workers from non-English speaking backgrounds. This particular company has had a long involvement with WELL funded language training which helps to explain her awareness of the issue.

In informal discussions over morning tea and lunch, it became clear that literacy and numeracy were not significant issues for the participants. There is an assumption that most workers are able to read and write well enough to do the job. It should be stressed however, that this depends on the workplace and the industry. Participants from the finance, administration and insurance industries didn't see literacy and numeracy as issues, whereas manufacturing industries did, because of the typically non-English speaking backgrounds of their workers.

During the informal discussion, one of the participants could remember one of their workers having trouble with reading and maintaining the record keeping system (which was highly reliant on literacy skills) and they had sent her 'off to Sydney' to do a course. She came back 'fixed' and could now take minutes at meetings and keep the required records. When talking further about the type of work that was required in this particular job, it was highly dependent on quite sophisticated literacy and numeracy skills which were assumed to be present.

During the workshop, in an activity about fairness and flexibility in assessment, small groups were asked to:

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Identify a situation where an individual with special needs could be disadvantaged in your workplace. How could you ensure that these individuals would not be discriminated against?

One example, given by one of the participants from a community centre, was of a worker who *can't read or write well* who was given training and support from other workers to help write a letter, but this was very time-consuming. She was given assertiveness training and the roster was organised to 'buddy' her with someone for three months. Her case notes were very simple and gradually verbal reports were used more than written reports. (It should be noted however, that this particular example may have been influenced by the researcher's participation in the small group and the preceding informal discussion during morning tea. The example is the same as the morning tea one.)

A second example came from the manufacturing industry where workers from non-English speaking backgrounds were having trouble understanding work instructions and terminology. WELL teachers were used in one-to-one tutorials to familiarise workers with terminology etc before their assessments. The assessor was aware of the language difficulties and a lot of the assessment was hands-on demonstration of the skills, with a lot of pointing rather than talking, ie the assessment was not assessing their English skills but their ability to do the job.

These were the only examples over the three days of explicit reference to literacy and language issues, coming from the participants, not the presenter.

Similarly in the second observation (Train the Trainer: Workplace Training) only one of the participants out of 15, when talking about his workplace (a factory with a high number of NESB workers), raised English language as an issue and the need to avoid written text for instruction. Everything had to be done orally, using other workers to translate and through demonstration of processes.

This was the only instance of literacy and numeracy, or more accurately, language, being raised as an issue by a participant in the three day workshop.

Literacy and numeracy in the manual (Workplace Assessment)

The manual, *Workplace Assessment*, produced by the RTO, was used as the organising framework for the three days, with the presenter working through it section by section with occasional additional material. The manual had been up-dated in June 1999 and although literacy and numeracy were not explicitly addressed, it was assumed that the

experienced trainers and workplace consultants who had worked on the up-date were familiar with literacy and numeracy issues. (However, from a literacy/ numeracy perspective, there is little evidence of this in the manual.)

The manual begins with an overview of the sessions:

Overviewing competency standards
Key principles of assessment
Gathering assessment evidence
Planning and organising assessment
Assessment tools and decision making
Managing and reviewing assessment.

Also at the beginning of the manual is a Module Outline with an Aim, Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria (5 pages) in the familiar, competency-based curriculum format.

Literacy and numeracy are mentioned for the first time on pg. 21 of the manual as part of what needs to be done to prepare for the work-based assessment task:

> *Draw up a profile of persons to be assessed that indicates factors that need to be taken into account when conducting the assessment eg. special needs, non-English speaking background,* ***literacy and numeracy*** *considerations.*

However, no further explanation or details were given as to what this might mean.

The units of competency (BSZ401A Plan Assessment, BSZ402A Conduct Assessment and BSZ403A Review Assessment) from the training package are reproduced on pg. 41 of the manual. Apart from these references to literacy and numeracy (from the training package and quoted in Chapter 1, Section 3), there is little explicit reference to literacy and numeracy in the manual. Or more accurately, there is little reference to literacy and numeracy as issues that may need to be 'unpacked' or 'problematised' in some way.

A number of communication competencies are used as the basis of activities designed to ensure fair, valid and reliable assessments. One of these is 'Communicate effectively' used in an activity (*Workplace Assessment* p. 94.) It includes the Element - 'Communicate in writing', with Performance Criteria that state:

- *A dictionary is used to assist in accurate spelling*
- *Vocabulary appropriate to workplace is used*
- *Documents are proof-read and checked*

- *Appropriate paperwork is prepared*
- *Relevant forms are completed correctly.*

More information is given in the Range of Variables (p. 95):

- *Communication includes written and oral*
- *Office equipment includes: phone, fax, personal computer, photocopier, binder*
- *Written communication includes: memos, letters, faxes*
- *Relevant forms include: time sheets, attendance sheets, client records, sick leave forms.*

It was assumed by participants in the workshop, and by the presenter, that people have such skills. This is an instance of where if someone is not aware of, or alert to, literacy and numeracy issues, then the training does not provide this awareness. Participants were aware in certain cases of physical adjustments that may need to be made in workplaces to cater for people with special needs. For example, one participant described the adjustments that were made in her workplace for three visually impaired workers. Another mentioned a worker whose leg had been amputated and the team work and modifications that were made as a result. However, it seems that without direct experience of someone having reading or writing difficulties, literacy and numeracy remain hidden issues.

Literacy and numeracy in the manual (Train the Trainer: Workplace Training)

The manual, *Train the Trainer: Workplace Training*, which had been updated in May 1999 was used from time to time during the second workshop, interspersed with the presenter's own material and activities. There was a strong emphasis on group interaction and participation, on drawing on the experiences of the group, and modelling a variety of training strategies and techniques.

In contrast to the *Workplace Assessment* manual, the competency standards from the training package were not reproduced in full. Instead, only the Elements and the Performance Criteria appear (not the Range of Variables and the Evidence Guide). Language and literacy are mentioned specifically, twice in the manual. For example, in an activity about 'Communication skills for effective training' (p. 62) the following question is asked: *How can the following affect communication:*

- *cultural background?*
- ***language and literacy**?*
- *body language and delivery?*

During the workshop, in response to this activity and referring to written communication, one small group listed the following things as being important for effective training:

- *clear & concise (no flowery paragraphs)*
- *logical sequence*
- *point form or short paragraphs - not too much information*
- *correct spelling and punctuation*
- *simple language - no jargon*
- *use diagrams and tables when required to illustrate a point*
- *neat, well spaced writing*
- *using bold, CAPITALS and underlining to emphasise important points*
- *colours and large print to attract the reader's attention*

One further explicit mention of literacy in the manual is in an activity about developing resources which states that Visual aids [may be used] *to help trainees with poor literacy* (p. 70).

Presenters' awareness of literacy and numeracy

Neither presenter demonstrated particular awareness of the importance of making literacy and numeracy explicit in their workshops.

Although one of the presenters had taught adult literacy a number of years ago, it was only one of a number of aspects that were mentioned when considering the learner. For example, in an activity about the training process, under 'Profile the learner' (p. 26 of the Workplace Training manual) the presenter alerted the group to *Think about literacy skills, second language ...* However, no more detail was given.

It should be noted that many of the effective training strategies demonstrated in the workshop, though not explicitly directed at literacy and numeracy learners, would be helpful to them. Emphasis on different learning styles, using a variety of resources and techniques and focussing on effective communication skills would benefit all learners.

A follow-up interview with one of the presenters confirmed what had been observed (see Appendix III for details of the interview). The presenter revealed little awareness of literacy and numeracy as issues to be addressed and the understanding of 'special needs' was largely confined to physical disability or 'dyslexia'.

In a discussion about portfolios as commonly used assessment

methods, it was clear that the underpinning literacy skills required to produce a portfolio were not realised.[2]

Resources suggested by Presenters 1 and 2

Neither presenter referred to any specific resources related to literacy and numeracy during the workshops. The ITAB was referred to as a resource for standards and competencies, and participants were urged not to *re-invent, use what's there*.

Summary discussion

It can be concluded from the observation data that at this particular site of delivery of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, very little explicit attention was given to literacy and numeracy, either as issues to be made aware of, or in terms of strategies for dealing with literacy and numeracy in workplace training and assessments. For many participants, literacy and numeracy remain non-issues. Unless there is direct experience from participants' own workplaces of literacy and numeracy needs, then the training they received neither raised their awareness nor alerted them to strategies or resources for dealing with literacy and numeracy in their training and assessments. It can also be said that literacy and numeracy remain non-issues for the presenters delivering the Certificate, either because of their own lack of awareness, or because literacy and numeracy were not raised by the participants. Despite the fact that this is only one site of delivery of the Certificate, it still needs to be acknowledged that if literacy and numeracy are to be seriously and genuinely incorporated into the implementation of training packages then more work needs to be done in raising awareness of literacy and numeracy among the deliverers of the Certificate IV qualification, as well as at the level of trainers and assessors.

2 The issue of portfolio assessment was also mentioned at the VEAC breakfast where it was acknowledged that producing a portfolio requires particular skills and people need to be trained in this area.

3.4 Differences in the delivery of training in comparison to the previous certificate

With the advent of the new training package, it could be assumed that RTOs who had been delivering the previous Certificate IV in Workplace Trainer Category 2 would need to make some changes to what they delivered under the new Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, particularly in the area of literacy and numeracy. This appears to be the case in some organisations, but not in others.

The inclusion of literacy and numeracy into the training package has not resulted in any major change in the way that the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training was delivered by the provider observed in this research.

As has already been noted, unless trainers and assessors already have some experience of literacy and numeracy in their workplace, usually through WELL projects, then this particular provider's training in Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training does not provide them with any awareness or strategies for dealing with such issues.

However, there are some providers who are making changes to the way they deliver the new Certificate IV, notably those participating in the Framing the Future projects and they have been mentioned previously in relation to their bridging courses (see 3.2: Skills Gap).

Summary discussion

Generally little major change in delivery has occurred as a result of the change from the previous certificate to the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training.

The majority continued to do pretty much what they'd been doing.

(Informant 1)

3.5 Obtaining the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training

There is great variety in the way that people can gain the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training qualification. There is a significant difference in cost, length of time taken and modes of delivery across sites. Such differences have resulted in concerns about quality which have been discussed previously in 3.2: Quality issues.

On the 5 August 1999, the NAWTB website listed 73 registered providers in NSW. 63 of these are listed as providing the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. Only one of these 63 providers

listed *cross cultural communication/literacy awareness for assessors/trainers* as a particular speciality (not surprisingly this is Workplace Communication Services, NSW AMES). Two of the 63 providers also list the Diploma of Training and Assessment Systems. It should be noted however, that the provider which later became the site for observation, also offers the Diploma but this was not listed on the website details.

A number of providers were randomly selected from this list and telephoned to find out how the Certificate was delivered. This varied significantly from provider to provider, both in terms of how the Certificate is packaged, ie module by module, RPL, face-to-face hours and in terms of cost. The more detailed information comes from brochures provided by the RTO, otherwise the information came from the phone conversation. All providers offered some form of RPL (even though it may not be stated explicitly in Provider 1-3's details). Some providers emphasised their RPL provision more than their workshop provision. Data from the survey has been summarised in the following table:

Provider	Modules	Duration (days)	Cost	
1	– Train Small Groups	2		$595
	– Workplace Assessment	2		$595
	– Implement Training	3		$795
	Total:	7		$1985
			mem.	non mem.
2	– Train Small Groups	3	$699	$799
	– Workplace Assessment	3	$699	$799
	– Preparing Training Programs	2	$499	$599
	– Preparing & Delivering Training Sessions	2	$499	$599
	– Evaluating & Promoting Training	2	$499	$599
	Total:	12	$2895	$3395
	Train-the-Trainer Upgrade	1+ workplace project	$295	$345

Provider	Modules	Duration (days)	Cost
3	– Train the Trainer: Workplace Training	3	$840
	– Professional facilitation of learning (Deliver training sessions)	2	$690
	– Developing Workplace Training Programs (Plan & promote a training program & Plan a series of training sessions)	3	$840
	– Workplace Assessment (Plan, conduct & review assessment)	3	$840
	– Reviewing Training (Review training)	1	$350
	Total:	12	$3560
4	– No trainer/assessor qualifications Existing qualifications - RPL	11	$3500
	– Combination of experience & qualifications + self assessment questionnaire, pre-readings, review of competencies, role plays & a training & evaluation session	2	$1500-$1800
5	– RPL portfolio		$1190
	– Assessor Training	2	$550
6	– RPL meeting & evidence		$350 per group of units
	– Workshops	3	$550
	– Helpline & some distance delivery		
	– Certificate IV	200 nominal hrs	av. $1650

Table 1: *Summary of various providers' packaging of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training*

Provider 1 was the only provider to make explicit reference to literacy and numeracy. This was in their course outline for 'Implement Training' where literacy and numeracy issues appear under the heading: 'Prepare learning resources'.

Summary discussion

Obtaining a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training may take anything from an RPL interview, to a 7 day workshop, to a 12 day workshop and may cost anywhere between $1190 to $3560 for approximately 200 hours.

Informant 5, accepting the wide variance between trainers and providers as being part of the normal education 'market', saw the individual as being responsible for their own choices:

> *You get what you pay for and get who you know ... Just like any other product you'll get good, bad, cheap, good value ... People need to form networks and ask questions and gradually learn about these issues over a lifetime to find good from bad. That's a learning experience in itself.*

Although this is a small sample of RTOs, it gives some indication of the variety of ways that one can obtain the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. The variety itself is not a problem, but it does lead to concerns about parity between providers and the quality of the assessors and trainers being awarded the certificate. It also raises the question of the quality of the RPL processes in place if a provider awards certificates in this way. Who monitors such procedures? Does a certificate from one provider guarantee the same competence in training and assessment as a certificate from another provider? Many informants raised this as an issue.

Many in the field are committed to obtaining the necessary skills and experience to carry out quality assessments and training. As is evidenced in the FTF2 example mentioned elsewhere in this report, of an RTO offering an eighteen hour bridging course for its Category 2 trainers and assessors to up-skill them to the Certificate IV.

However, there is also a recognition that ultimately it's the 'bit of paper' that counts and how that is achieved doesn't really matter. There is a belief that many employers are not concerned about who awarded the certificate, only that you have one. Ultimately it is

> *ANTA's responsibility through the ITABs to deal with concerns about consistency across providers.* (Informant 7)

3.6 Other findings

A number of other issues also arose from the research which do not fall directly under the research question headings, but are important to note.

Confusion about the term 'training package'

Discussions with many informants revealed misunderstandings and confusion about what the term 'training package' actually means. Many people expect to see training materials, similar to a curriculum or syllabus. They *still assume it means a script for training; that it will tell you what to do* (Informant 1 and FtF2). In this way, the term is considered

to be misleading. According to one trainer, it's *not my idea of a Training Package!* (Informant 1).

The crucial shift from training to assessment is still not fully understood by many trainers.

> *Some trainers are still not grasping that 'curriculum' as such is gone, and the emphasis is more on assessment.* (FtF2)

Importance of customisation

A number of informants stressed the importance of customisation; that:

> *Training packages need to be specific to industries and should be run in the context of that particular industry, so that examples and competencies are related to that context. They are not generic.*
>
> (Informants 1 & 3)

Accompanying the need for customisation however is the capacity of RTOs and trainers to actually do it. According to Informant 5, *customisation skills are lower than they should be across the board.*

The changing role of the trainer

The role of the trainer is changing dramatically. Trainers may now be expected to be train, assess, mentor, write learning guides, develop training plans, liaise with management, unions and workers, write submissions, etc. One of the new roles of the new trainer is that of *'Business development manager'* according to FtF1.

On-the-job training and assessment is vastly different to off-the-job training and assessment. There is a shift from measurement-driven assessment (ie testing) to evidence-gathering assessment (ie portfolios) which requires a significant change in practice for some trainers and assessors. Governments, employers and providers need to take account of the demands on individuals of such change, and to support such changes with professional development and resources.

Screening out

Discussions with more than one informant revealed a disturbing situation where recruitment screens are being used to exclude applicants who do not have sufficient English language or literacy skills. Companies that have invested time and money into language, literacy and numeracy programs over a number of years, often through WELL programs, are now finding it more 'efficient' to screen out people with low levels of English language and literacy. This raises obvious issues of access and equity.

Summary discussion

These findings (3.2 - 3.6) confirm the need for professional development across various subject areas - what is a training package, reading and interpreting competencies, assessment, incorporation of literacy and numeracy and customisation of programs to suit individual trainees. As well, trainers need to be able to develop learning programs to ensure the competencies are achieved and to write training materials, move from a measurement-driven assessment model to evidence-gathering assessment models. There are significant attitudinal changes and changes to practice, that need to occur on the part of many trainers and assessors if training packages are to be implemented successfully and if literacy and numeracy are to be incorporated effectively. Professional development plays a crucial role in this implementation and the time and resources necessary to provide such professional development need to be made available.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Conclusions from the research fall into two major areas - the need for professional development, and concerns about quality.

In terms of professional development, there are two aspects that need addressing:

1. Professional development about training packages
2. Professional development to raise awareness of literacy and numeracy.

Professional development about training packages

Training packages represent a radical change in vocational education and training in Australia and are presented in ANTA documents as unproblematic, as positive solutions to Australia's current and future training needs. Industry is required to play a vital role in determining the skills taught and the standards to be reached. This shift from provider-centred training with accredited curriculum to industry-centred skills development and training is a major one and requires a change in mind set and practice on behalf of many trainers, assessors, educational providers and industries.

Such a shift requires support in the form of professional development. This research reveals that many trainers and assessors do not have the required skills. It is worth remembering that when competency based training (CBT) was first introduced a number of years ago, it was found that the way in which new teachers first learned about it contributed significantly to their understanding and shaped their attitude to it. Initial staff development was crucial in determining the overall acceptance and understanding of the innovation (NCVER, in press). In the beginning, there was a great deal of very instrumental and narrow interpretations, yet after a while as teachers and trainers came to terms with it, so too, creative, educationally sound and effective programs developed. This is likely to be similar in relation to training packages. Peter Kell (1999) suggests that

> *The move away from institutionalised learning and the pressure to generate curriculum might release teachers to take up quite different interventions in workplaces to change the lives of workers.*

And Peter Waterhouse at the ALNARC Forum in Melbourne, February 17, 2000 stated:

> *In some respects the Packages provide greater flexibility and scope for educational innovation and creative program design than was the case with the former accredited modular curriculum. The Packages specify endpoints, in terms of endorsed competencies and standards, but they do not specify educational methods, or the multiple ways the goals may be reached. The Packages can be read as creating space for innovative educators to explore and colonise.*
>
> (Waterhouse, P. 2000, p. 5)

However, it should be noted that 'innovative educators' usually have a wealth of experience and training to draw on (and often post-graduate qualifications) when designing effective learning programs. Many of the trainees in this research are new to the field and require initial and ongoing professional development and support. It should also be noted that the VET sector, as a result of the current neoliberal reforms mentioned in Chapter 1, is undergoing a period of low morale and high stress which tends to mitigate against the development of creative, innovative learning programs, as trainers strive to respond quickly to 'bottom-line' demands.

Framing the Future (FtF) has achieved some success in supporting the implementation of training packages. In an evaluation of FtF (http://www.tafe.sa.edu.au/institutes/para/ftf/ eval/98ch6.htm, undated, Accessed 13/12/99), it was pointed out however that any significant change, such as the implementation of the NTF, involves people's feelings as well as their minds. People may feel anxious, uncertain, perhaps threatened, and these feelings need to be acknowledged when introducing change. Professional development needs to take account of people's feelings about change and attitudes to the innovation as well as their skills.

It is also worth reiterating the confusion that the naming of training packages as training packages has caused. This naming, or mis-naming, has resulted in a need to explain the differences between the 'new' training packages and what may previously have been understood as a training package or syllabus.

Professional development about literacy and numeracy

ANTA has acknowledged the importance of literacy and numeracy by requiring their incorporation into training packages. This incorporation however, does not happen simply by being written into the standards. Trainers and assessors need to become aware of the importance of literacy and numeracy and to develop strategies for dealing with them in training

and assessments. This research has shown that currently most trainers and assessors do not have the awareness of literacy and numeracy, or the accompanying strategies to effectively deal with literacy and numeracy in their work.

The professional development needs involved in the incorporation of literacy and numeracy into training packages are significant. There appears to be little acknowledgement of the qualifications, expertise and experience that are necessary to adequately address the literacy and numeracy needs of trainees. How can trainers be expected in a 3 or 7 or 12 day workshop or in some cases, on-the-job, to acquire the awareness, let alone skills and strategies, for dealing with literacy and numeracy that has taken literacy and numeracy teachers years of experience and often post graduate qualifications to achieve?

There is a danger that unless trainers and assessors are made aware of literacy and numeracy, then the incorporation of literacy and numeracy into training packages remains largely academic. Trainers and assessors need professional development and need to be made aware of the useful resources that do exist (mentioned in Chapter 3). An agreement should be reached between industry, ANTA and registration bodies about the minimum knowledge of literacy and numeracy awareness that is required of trainers. Otherwise, the incorporation of literacy and numeracy into training packages is little more than lip service.

Quality issues

The other significant finding from the research was in relation to quality control and procedures. No one seems to be taking responsibility for a number of quality issues, such as parity of qualifications across providers and moderation of assessments across providers. There is an assumption that the 'market' will regulate such issues. However, experience has shown that market forces do not always have quality issues at the forefront of their decision-making. Government, ie ANTA, should ensure that standards are met. This is where an 'Education ITAB' may have a role to play, as none of the existing agencies appear to be taking responsibility for monitoring standards or ensuring parity.

Final comment

Finally, as has been stated previously, training packages provide a challenge to educators and industry because they represent significant change in practice. Incorporating literacy and numeracy into training in a substantial, rather than superficial, way is also a challenge. It is crucial to

the training reform agenda to ensure that all Australians have broad-based, generic communication skills that allow them to problem solve, transfer knowledge from circumstance to circumstance, think critically and work in culturally diverse teams. Such skills do not come from narrow, specific, industry-based competencies but from broad notions of multiliteracies and multinumeracies which, if enacted, will contribute to the economic and social well-being of the country.

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Appendix I

The language, literacy and numeracy skills required of trainers/ assessors as specified in the Evidence Guide of the Training Package

BSZ402A Conduct Assessment:

Language, literacy and numeracy skills are required to:

- *give clear and precise instructions and information in spoken or written form*
- *seek confirmation of understanding from the persons being assessed*
- *adjust language to suit target audience*
- *prepare required documentation using clear and comprehensible lanugage and layout*
- *ask probing questions and listen strategically to understand responses of the person being assessed*
- *seek additional information for clarification purposes*
- *use verbal and non-verbal language to promote a supportive assessment environment*
- *use language of negotiation and conflict resolution to minimise conflict*

BSZ403A Review Assessment

Language, literacy and numeracy skills are required to:

- *read and interpret review procedures*
- *participate in discussions and listen strategically to evaluate information critically*
- *gather, select and organise findings from a number of sources*
- *document findings in summary form, graphs or tables*
- *present findings in a short report to relevant personnel*
- *make recommendations based on findings*
- *determine cost effectiveness.*

BSZ404A Train Small Groups

Language, literacy and numeracy skills are required to:

- *conduct discussions and ask probing questions to review the training*
- *gather information (in spoken or written form) for review purposes*
- *make verbal recommendations for delivery of future training*
- *adjust language to suit target audience (training participant/appropriate personnel)*
- *complete records on training*
- *provide verbal feedback and report on training outcomes*
- *follow and model examples of written texts*
- *promote training in verbal or written form.*

Appendix II

Informants

Organisations represented by key informants:

National Assessors and Workplace Trainers Body
Lever Rexona
Current Training, Rockhampton, Queensland
UTS Training and Development Services
Praxis Learning
Framing the Future, North Coast Regional Council of ACE*
Framing the Future, ACE Training and Consultancy Services**

Participants in Framing the Future Project 1 came from:

ACE Training and Consultancy Services
BACE
ECCA
Macarthur Community College
Manly Waringah Community College
Taree Adult Education Inc.

****Participants in Framing the Future Project 2 came from:***

Central Coast & Hunter Regional Council
New England & North West Regional Council
North Coast Regional Council
South East Regional Council
Taree Adult Education Inc.

Participants in the VET Assessor Network breakfast launch, 6 December 1999, came from:

Access Educational Services Division
Corrective Services Academy
CREATE Australia
Finbus ITAB
Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services ITAB
NSW Fire Brigade
Various TAFE institutes

Participants at the ALNARC Forum, 17 February 2000, Melbourne, came from:

ACAL
ANTA
Consultants
DETYA
Industry
Various RTOs - private and public

Appendix III

Interview with the presenter of 'Workplace Assessment'

1. How have the new training packages impinged on any aspects of delivery of courses?
   Most of this would have happened in the planning stage when people wrote the modules. ... Any modifications I have made haven't really been done with any reference to training packages at all. ... Where we would make some references to training packages is that the assessor competency standards are included in the manual and I refer to them as examples of competency standards. The first session is on competency standards. The training package is mentioned in passing. ... The people who do our course don't really need to look at the training package either. We tell them what they need to achieve to get their certificate of workplace assessor.

2. What gets mentioned about 'special needs' in relation to your modules?
   Practical things, eg what kind of modifications do you have to make ... eg people working on a switch board for people who are visually impaired ... eg at [name of a factory] the person was too broad and short to do some tasks on the machine . I use these kinds of examples ... another one of myself swimming .... to get the certificate you need to float in a certain way which I couldn't do ... examples of how not to be pedantic ...

3. What other kinds of special needs arise?
   No, they're the main ones. I include dyslexia. When I was in [name of a place] I took participants to a school that had bright kids but who had special learning needs, ie dyslexia.

4. How would you compensate for dyslexia in assessment?
   I ask them what they would do, ie the person with the special need...

5. If people do admit [to dyslexia] what strategies do you suggest to help them?
   Well normally we ask participants to think of ways ... eg getting their workers to do it orally. This happens a lot in factories where

reading levels are not high ... Although [laughs] a lot of assessing goes on while workers are on the floor with ear phones in ... so they don't hear what assessors are asking them! But a lot of assessing occurs by asking workers to compile a portfolio of evidence. ... I use the example of [a particular factory] system of assessing. It is by doing a knowledge test, eg safety, after some initial training before workers are put onto the floor then given some supervised training on machines etc. Before they are left alone they have to show they have done some trouble shooting etc. They do this by getting others to sign they can do these things ... kept in a portfolio of assessment. The final stage of assessment is when workers are brought before a panel and asked a lot of questions based on their portfolio.

6. How common are portfolios as a method of assessing?
   Pretty common.

7. Anything else come up from your colleagues, participants in your courses, their workers about meeting special needs?
   I can't think of anything at the moment ...

8. Are there other resources related to meeting special needs that you direct participants to?
   No ... and I don't know of any standards, procedures if special needs people came to our courses ...

9. Are there any resources recommended from the ITAB (NAWTB)?
   I don't know of any ...
   There is a section in our module for catering to special needs. It doesn't mention reading or writing in particular ... special needs in general. Basically there's an exercise that gets people to identify special needs they think their workers might have. ...Reading/writing usually comes up ... I don't know if I mention it or if they [participants] bring it in ...A lot of people are NESB ... most questions are oral. There are very few tests that are written. Where literacy comes up is pre-assessment ... eg screens for jobs such as clerical, but not factory floor operating machinery. [a particular factory] does have a pre-assessment literacy screen for all their workers ... want a reasonable level of English language.

Appendix IV

Resources listed on the NAWTB website

Resources relevant to "numeracy"

1. A Directory of Professional Development Programs and Resources
2. Addressing Language, Literacy and Numeracy Issues in Workplace Assessment
3. Better Training Addressing English Language, Literacy and Numeracy in Vocational Education
4. Case Studies Assessing Workplace Communication Books 1 and 2
5. Effective Communication and Training - A guide for workplace trainers in the Coal Industry
6. George and Louise: making training accessible to all learners
7. Getting the Message Across
8. How to write successful training materials: a guide
9. Integrating Language, Literacy and Numeracy into Vocational Education and Training
10. Training and Development Competence: A Practical Guide

Resources relevant to "literacy"

1. A Directory of Professional Development Programs and Resources
2. Addressing Language, Literacy and Numeracy Issues in Workplace Assessment
3. Better Training Addressing English Language, Literacy and Numeracy in Vocational Education
4. Case Studies Assessing Workplace Communication Books 1 and 2
5. Choosing Quality Training for your Business
6. Communication Counts
7. Designing Training and Development Systems
8. Effective Communication and Traininq - A guide for workplace trainers in the Coal Industry
9. George and Louise: making training accessible to all learners
10. Getting the Message Across
11. How to write successful training materials: a guide
12. Integrating Language, Literacy and Numeracy into Vocational Education and Training

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13. Made to Measure: LLN in TCF Industry Training A guide for Workplace Trainers
14. Training and Development Competence: A Practical Guide

Details of one of the resources listed above, as it appears on the NAWTB website

Units of competency

Title: Better Training Addressing English Language, Literacy and Numeracy in Vocational Education

Publisher: (1997) ANTA

Media: Resource Book

Contact: Adult Basic Education Resource and Information Service, 300 Flinders St, Melbourne 3000

Target Group: Workplace trainers assessors, Vocational teachers, Course writers, Language, literacy , numeracy

Description: A self access resource book designed for workplace trainers and curriculum writers to understand the role that language, literacy, numeracy plays in vocational education and training. It gives strategies to address language, literacy, numeracy as part of training. The units are based on Workplace Training Competencies. It is divided into 4 sections: Getting to know about LLN; Making training packages better for learners with LLN needs; Managing learning for learners with LLN needs; Assessing learning with LLN needs. The resource is designed to be used for professional development purposes within an organisation.

Relevance to: B SZ401 A, B SZ402A, B SZ403 A, B SZ404A, B SZ405A, BSZ406A, BSZ407A, Professional development

Resource Added: June 29, 1998 at 08.03:55

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